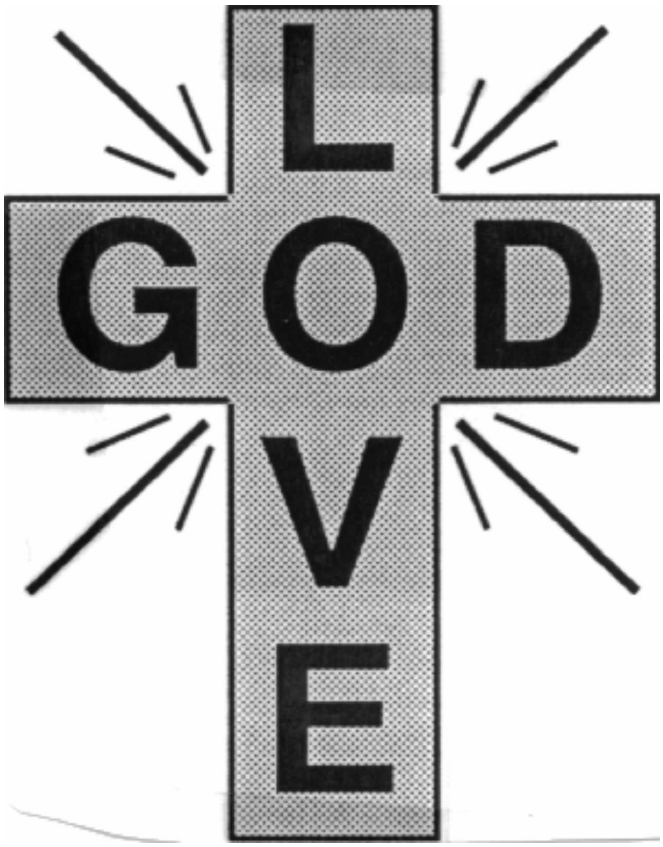

IT'S A GIFT

By Jim Gialas

It’s A Gift

By Jim Giatas

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S.D.G.

Soli Deo Gloria — Glory to God alone

Μόνον τῷ Θεῷ ἡ δόξα (Monon tō Theō hē doxa)

“The gift of God is eternal life

through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Romans 6:23

Dedication

To the Giver of every good and perfect gift— to the Lord Jesus Christ, whose grace is free, whose rest is deep, whose yoke is gentle, and whose burden is light.

To all who labor under the weight of life, who long for peace, who hunger for forgiveness, and who yearn for rest— may you discover in Him the gift that cannot be earned and the love that cannot be lost.

And to my father, **Peter Giatas**, whose journey from Siatista to America taught me that every breath, every opportunity, and every moment of grace is a gift from God.

Epigraph

"The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Romans 6:23

"Come unto Me… and I will give you rest." Matthew 11:28

"My yoke is easy, and My burden is light." Matthew 11:30

Preface

There are moments in life when a simple phrase carries more weight than we expect. *"It's a gift."* People say it with humility, sometimes with wonder, sometimes with a quiet recognition that what they possess did not originate from themselves. A talent, a kindness, a strength, a resilience—these things often defy explanation. They feel given.

This book was born from reflecting on that truth, and from recognizing how deeply it resonates with the gospel itself. Scripture tells us plainly that **eternal life is a gift**—not a wage, not a reward, not the result of human striving, but the gracious offering of God through Jesus Christ. And yet, the more I pondered this, the more I realized that the gifts of God extend far beyond salvation's doorway. Christ Himself speaks of another gift, one that meets us in our weariness:

"Come unto Me… and I will give you rest."

Rest is a gift. Forgiveness is a gift. Peace is a gift. Hope is a gift. Christ's presence is a gift. Even His call—His yoke, His burden—is a gift.

This may seem strange at first. Jesus tells us that His yoke is easy and His burden is light, even as He calls us to deny ourselves, take up the cross, and follow Him. But the more I have walked with Him, the more I have discovered that His burden is not the burden of guilt or fear—it is the burden of grace. It is the weight of mercy. It is the call of love. It is the invitation to walk with Him, not for Him. It is the surrender that heals rather than harms, the obedience that flows from forgiveness rather than fear.

The Christian life is not a ladder to climb; it is a gift to receive. Not a performance to perfect; but a relationship to enter. Not a burden to carry alone; but a life carried by Christ Himself.

This book explores that reality. It traces the gifts God gives—rest, forgiveness, strength, endurance, hope, joy—and shows how each one is rooted in Christ's gentle invitation: *Come unto Me*. It is my prayer that these pages will help you see the Christian life not as a weight upon your shoulders, but as grace placed into your hands. Not as a demand, but as a delight. Not as a burden, but as a gift.

Everything begins with grace. Everything continues through grace. Everything ends in grace.

Because in the end, the believer's confession is simple and true:

It's a gift.

**Introduction

*The Gift That Changes Everything***

The Christian life begins with an invitation—simple, gentle, and spoken by the One who knows the weight we carry: *"Come unto Me."* Those words are not a demand. They are not a test. They are not a burden. They are a gift. And they open the door to every other gift Christ gives.

This book was written to explore those gifts—not as theological abstractions, not as distant ideals, but as lived realities for weary souls who long for rest, peace, hope, and the quiet assurance that Christ Himself is enough. Each chapter traces a different facet of His generosity, revealing how grace meets us, shapes us, carries us, and completes us.

The journey begins with the gift we cannot earn and moves steadily through the gifts of rest, surrender, identity, transformation, peace, hope, and finally completion. Along the way, the reader discovers that the Christian life is not a climb toward God but a walk with God; not the achievement of holiness but the reception of grace; not the burden of religion but the freedom of belonging.

Every page is meant to breathe one truth into the heart: **Christ gives what we cannot earn. Christ carries what we cannot lift. Christ completes what we cannot finish.**

And all of it—every step, every promise, every mercy—is a gift.

This book is an invitation to see that gift clearly, receive it deeply, and rest in it fully. May these pages help you lay down what Christ never asked you to carry and take up what He freely offers: His rest, His peace, His hope, His life.

May you find, as countless believers have found before you, that the Christian life—at its beginning, in its middle, and at its end—is shaped by one simple, beautiful truth:

It's a gift.

Key Scripture Passages

"The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Romans 6:23

"Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Matthew 11:28

"Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me… and ye shall find rest unto your souls." Matthew 11:29

"For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light." Matthew 11:30

"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights." James 1:17

"By grace are ye saved through faith… it is the gift of God." Ephesians 2:8

"My peace I give unto you… not as the world giveth." John 14:27

"I will give you rest." Matthew 11:28

"If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me." Luke 9:23

"And ye shall find rest unto your souls." Matthew 11:29

**Author's Notes

*On Receiving What Cannot Be Earned***

Every book has a beginning, but not every book has a reason. *This* one does. It was born from a simple truth that kept returning to me—quietly, persistently, insistently—until it demanded to be written: the Christian life is not a burden to carry, but a gift to receive.

I have spent years watching believers—myself included—struggle under weights Christ never asked us to bear. We try to earn what He gives freely. We try to prove what He has already declared. We try to carry what He has already lifted. And somewhere along the way, the joy of grace becomes buried beneath the rubble of effort.

This book is my attempt to clear that rubble. To uncover again the beauty of what Christ gives. To remind the weary heart that everything He offers is gift.

The chapters you have just read were shaped by Scripture, by prayer, and by the quiet lessons learned through years of walking with Christ—sometimes confidently, sometimes haltingly, sometimes with tears, sometimes with joy. But always with grace. Always with the gentle voice of the Savior saying, *Come unto Me… and I will give you rest*.

If there is one desire behind these pages, it is this: that you would breathe again. That you would rest again. That you would see Christ again—not as a taskmaster, but as a Giver. Not as a burden, but as a Shepherd. Not as a demand, but as a gift.

The Christian life is not the story of our striving; it is the story of His giving. It is not the record of our achievements; it is the record of His grace. It is not the weight of religion; it is the freedom of belonging.

And so, as you close this book, I pray you carry one truth with you—not as a phrase, not as a theme, but as a lived reality:

Everything Christ gives is grace. Everything grace gives is gift. And Christ Himself is the greatest gift of all.

May this truth steady your steps, lighten your burdens, deepen your peace, and anchor your hope. May it shape your days, strengthen your walk, and quiet your soul. And may it remind you, again and again, that the life Christ gives is not earned, not deserved, not achieved.

It's a gift.

Table of Contents

Front Matter

- **Dedication**
- **Epigraph**
- **Preface**
- **Introduction**
- **Key Scripture Passages**
- **Author's Notes — On Receiving What Cannot Be Earned**
- **Table of Contents**

Chapters

1. **Chapter One — The Gift We Cannot Earn**
2. **Chapter Two — The Gift of Rest: Come Unto Me**

3. **Chapter Three — The Gift of a Gentle Yoke**
4. **Chapter Four — The Gift of Self-Denial: Losing the Weight That Crushes Us**
5. **Chapter Five — The Gift of the Cross: The Place Where Rest and Surrender Meet**
6. **Chapter Six — The Gift of Surrender: Where Rest Becomes Strength**
7. **Chapter Seven — The Gift of Following: Walking in the Steps of the Giver**
8. **Chapter Eight — The Gift of Restored Identity: Belonging to the Giver**
9. **Chapter Nine — The Gift of Transformation: Becoming What Grace Creates**
10. **Chapter Ten — The Gift of Peace: When the Soul Finally Breathes**
11. **Chapter Eleven — The Gift of Hope: The Future Held by Grace**
12. **Chapter Twelve — The Gift of Completion: Grace That Finishes What It Begins**

Closing Sections

- **Closing Chapter — The Gift That Holds Us to the End**
- **Epilogue — Grace at Every Step**
- **Postscript: What the Law Could Not Give, Christ Gives Freely**
- **Closing Epigraph**
- **Final Benediction — Grace Be With You Always**

Back Matter

- **About the Author**
- **Scripture Index**
- **Topical Index**
- **Legal Notices**

**Chapter One

*The Gift We Cannot Earn***

There is a moment in every believer's life when the heart awakens to a simple, life-altering truth: what God gives, He gives freely. Eternal life is not a wage. Forgiveness is not a transaction. Rest is not a reward. Peace is not a prize. Everything God gives—everything that brings life, hope, and salvation—is a gift.

We spend so much of our lives striving. We labor under burdens we were never meant to carry. We try to prove ourselves, justify ourselves, and make ourselves worthy of what only God can give. Yet the Scriptures speak with a clarity that cuts through all our efforts:

"The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Romans 6:23

A gift is not earned. A gift is not deserved. A gift is not achieved. A gift is received.

And so the Christian life begins not with doing, but with receiving. Not with striving, but with surrender. Not with proving ourselves, but with admitting our need. It begins with grace—pure, undeserved, unearned grace.

Jesus extends this grace with an invitation that reaches into the deepest weariness of the human soul:

"Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Matthew 11:28

Rest is not something we create. It is not something we manufacture. It is not something we fight for. It is given.

Christ does not say, "Come to Me, and I will teach you how to rest." He says, "Come to Me… and I will *give* you rest."

Rest is a gift.

But Jesus goes further. He speaks of a yoke—His yoke—and a burden—His burden. At first, this seems strange. How can rest and burden coexist? How can a yoke be easy? How can a burden be light?

The answer lies in the nature of the gift.

Christ's burden is not the burden of guilt, fear, or condemnation. It is the burden of forgiveness. It is the weight of mercy. It is the call of love. It is the invitation to walk with Him, not apart from Him. His yoke is easy because He carries it with us. His burden is light because it is carried in grace.

And yet, He calls us to deny ourselves, take up the cross, and follow Him. This too is a gift. Self-denial frees us from the tyranny of self. The cross we carry is not the cross of punishment, but the cross of belonging. Following Him is not a lonely march—it is a walk with the Giver of every good gift.

The Christian life is not a burden placed upon our shoulders. It is a gift placed into our hands.

A gift of forgiveness. A gift of rest. A gift of peace. A gift of hope. A gift of Christ Himself.

This first chapter begins where all true faith begins: with the recognition that everything God gives is grace, and everything grace gives is a gift. The believer's confession is simple, humble, and true:

It's a gift.

**Chapter Two

*The Gift of Rest: Come Unto Me***

There is a reason Jesus begins His invitation with the word *Come*. He does not say, "Work harder." He does not say, "Try again." He does not say, "Fix yourself first." He simply says, *Come*. The call is gentle, but it is also urgent. It is spoken to those who labor, to those who are heavy laden, to those who have discovered that the weight of life is too great to carry alone.

"Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Matthew 11:28

Rest is not found in a place. Rest is not found in a method. Rest is not found in a philosophy. Rest is found in a Person.

And He gives it.

The rest Christ offers is not the rest of inactivity, nor the rest of escape, nor the rest of temporary relief. It is the rest of forgiveness, the rest of belonging, the rest of being carried by grace. It is the rest of a soul no longer trying to earn what can only be received. It is the rest of a heart no longer fighting to justify itself. It is the rest of knowing that salvation is a gift, not a wage.

But Jesus does not stop with rest. He speaks of a yoke—His yoke—and a burden—His burden.

"Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me… and ye shall find rest unto your souls." Matthew 11:29

A yoke is an instrument of work. A burden is something carried. Yet Christ calls them *rest*. How can this be?

The answer lies in the nature of the Giver.

His yoke is not the yoke of guilt. His burden is not the burden of fear. His call is not the call of condemnation.

His yoke is union. His burden is grace. His call is love.

To take His yoke is to be joined to Him. To carry His burden is to carry forgiveness. To learn of Him is to discover gentleness, mercy, and rest.

Christ's yoke is easy because He bears it with us. Christ's burden is light because it is carried in love. Christ's rest is deep because it is rooted in grace.

And yet, He calls us to deny ourselves, take up the cross, and follow Him. This is not a contradiction. It is the shape of the gift. Self-denial frees us from the weight of self. The cross we carry is not the cross of punishment, but the cross of belonging. Following Him is not a lonely path—it is a walk with the One who gives rest.

The gift of rest is not the absence of burden; it is the presence of Christ. The gift of His yoke is not the removal of responsibility; it is the sharing of life with Him. The gift of His burden is not heaviness; it is the freedom of forgiveness.

Everything He gives is grace. Everything grace gives is rest. Everything rest gives is Christ.

And so the believer comes—not to earn, not to prove, not to achieve—but to receive. To receive rest. To receive forgiveness. To receive Christ Himself.

Because in the end, the soul discovers what it could never learn through striving:

It's a gift.

**Chapter Three

*The Gift of a Gentle Yoke***

There is a moment in the Lord's invitation that often goes unnoticed. We hear His promise of rest, we feel the relief of His welcome, but then He speaks of something unexpected—something that seems, at first, out of place:

"Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me." Matthew 11:29

A yoke is an instrument of labor. It joins two together so they may walk in the same direction, bear the same weight, and move with the same purpose. It is not a symbol of leisure. It is not a picture of escape. It is a picture of work, of burden, of responsibility.

And yet Jesus calls His yoke a gift.

He does not say, “Take My yoke, and you will be crushed.” He does not say, “Take My yoke, and you will be overwhelmed.” He says, **“Take My yoke… and ye shall find rest unto your souls.”**

Rest through a yoke. Peace through a burden. Life through surrender.

This is the paradox of grace.

Christ’s yoke is gentle because He is gentle. Christ’s burden is light because He carries it with us. Christ’s call is restful because it is rooted in forgiveness.

The yoke He gives is not the yoke of guilt, fear, or condemnation. It is the yoke of belonging. It is the yoke of walking beside Him. It is the yoke of learning from Him—learning His heart, His ways, His gentleness, His humility.

“For I am meek and lowly in heart.” Matthew 11:29

The One who calls us to take His yoke is not harsh. He is not demanding. He is not impatient. He is meek—gentle, kind, tender toward the weary soul. And so His yoke becomes a gift, because it binds us to Him.

But Jesus also speaks of a burden:

“My burden is light.” Matthew 11:30

This burden is not the crushing weight of sin—that weight He bore Himself. It is not the burden of earning God’s favor—that burden He removed forever. It is not the burden of proving ourselves—that burden He never places upon His people.

His burden is the burden of grace. The burden of forgiveness. The burden of love.

It is the weight of mercy resting upon a forgiven heart. It is the call to walk in the freedom He gives. It is the invitation to live as one who belongs to Him.

And yet, He also says:

“If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.” Luke 9:23

Self-denial. Cross-bearing. Following.

These are not contradictions to His rest—they are expressions of it. Self-denial frees us from the tyranny of self. The cross we carry is not the cross of punishment, but the cross of identification with Christ. Following Him is not a lonely march—it is a walk with the One who gives rest.

His yoke is easy because it is shared. His burden is light because it is carried in love. His call is gentle because it is rooted in grace.

The Christian life is not a burden placed upon our shoulders. It is a gift placed into our hands.

A gift of rest. A gift of forgiveness. A gift of belonging. A gift of walking with Christ Himself.

And so the believer discovers that the yoke of Christ is not a weight to fear, but a grace to receive. It is the gentle bond that joins us to Him. It is the path where rest is found. It is the place where the soul learns peace.

Because in the end, the heart that walks with Christ learns to say with quiet certainty:

It's a gift.

**Chapter Four

*The Gift of Self-Denial: Losing the Weight That Crushes Us***

There is a part of Jesus' teaching that many hesitate to approach. It feels sharp, demanding, even severe—until we understand it through the lens of grace. After inviting the weary to come, after promising rest, after offering a gentle yoke and a light burden, Jesus speaks words that seem, at first, to contradict everything He has just said:

"If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me." Luke 9:23

Self-denial. Cross-bearing. Following.

These words have often been misunderstood as heavy requirements, as if Christ were replacing one crushing burden with another. But Jesus never contradicts Himself. The One who gives rest does not then place a weight upon us that steals it away. The One whose burden is light does not then hand us a burden too heavy to carry. The One whose yoke is gentle does not then bind us with a yoke of fear.

The key is this: **Self-denial is not the loss of life—it is the loss of the weight that destroys life.**

We do not deny ourselves because God wants us diminished. We deny ourselves because self is the heaviest burden we carry.

The burden of pride. The burden of self-importance. The burden of self-protection. The burden of self-justification. The burden of self-righteousness. The burden of self-rule.

These are the burdens that crush the soul. These are the weights that make life unbearable. These are the yokes that enslave the heart. And Jesus, in His mercy, calls us to lay them down—not as a demand, but as a gift.

Self-denial is freedom. It is the release of the heaviest burden of all: ourselves.

When Jesus calls us to take up the cross, He is not calling us to carry the cross He carried. His cross was the cross of atonement—ours is the cross of identification. His cross purchased salvation—ours expresses belonging. His cross bore sin—ours bears witness.

To take up the cross is to say, "I belong to Him." "I walk with Him." "I trust Him." "I surrender to His love."

It is not punishment. It is not condemnation. It is not despair.

It is the shape of grace in a believer's life.

And then Jesus says, **"Follow Me."** Not "Go before Me." Not "Walk alone." Not "Find your own way." But *Follow*—walk where He walks, stay where He stays, trust where He leads.

Following Christ is not a burden; it is a gift. It is the gift of direction in a world of confusion. It is the gift of companionship in a world of loneliness. It is the gift of purpose in a world of emptiness. It is the gift of love in a world of fear.

Self-denial becomes rest because it frees us from the tyranny of self. The cross becomes light because Christ carries it with us. Following becomes joy because we walk with the Giver of every good gift.

The Christian life is not a crushing demand—it is a liberating surrender. It is not the loss of self—it is the discovery of life. It is not the weight of religion—it is the freedom of grace.

And so the believer learns, slowly and gently, that even self-denial—perhaps the most misunderstood of Christ's teachings—is not a burden at all.

It's a gift.

**Chapter Five

*The Gift of the Cross: The Place Where Rest and Surrender Meet***

There is a moment in every believer's journey when the call of Christ becomes unmistakably clear. It is not merely the call to *come* to Him, nor only the call to *rest* in Him, but the call to *walk* with Him. And this walk always leads to one place—the cross. Not the cross He bore for our salvation, but the cross He gives for our transformation.

"If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me." Luke 9:23

The cross Christ gives is not a punishment. It is not a sentence. It is not a burden meant to crush. It is a gift—a strange gift, perhaps, but a gift nonetheless. It is the place where rest and surrender

meet, where grace and obedience join hands, where the believer discovers that the deepest freedom is found in the deepest surrender.

The cross is the place where self dies, and Christ lives. The place where fear dies, and trust grows. The place where pride dies, and humility blooms. The place where striving dies, and rest begins.

The cross is not the end of life—it is the end of the weight that keeps us from life.

We often imagine the cross as something heavy, something painful, something to dread. But Jesus says His burden is light. How can this be? Because the cross He gives is not the cross of condemnation—that cross He bore alone. The cross He gives is the cross of identification. It is the cross that says, "I belong to Him." It is the cross that frees us from the tyranny of self. It is the cross that teaches us to walk in His steps.

The cross is light because Christ carries it with us. The cross is gentle because it is shaped by grace. The cross is restful because it frees us from ourselves.

And so the believer discovers that the cross is not a burden added to life—it is the burden that removes all other burdens. It is the place where guilt is silenced, where fear is broken, where shame is undone, where hope is born. It is the place where Christ meets us, not as a taskmaster, but as a Savior; not as a judge, but as a Shepherd; not as a burden-giver, but as the Giver of rest.

To take up the cross daily is to receive a daily gift. A daily reminder that we are forgiven. A daily invitation to walk with Christ. A daily surrender that brings daily peace. A daily death that brings daily life.

The cross is not the price of discipleship—it is the gift of discipleship. It is the place where Christ's rest becomes our rest, where His strength becomes our strength, where His life becomes our life.

And so the believer learns, slowly and gently, that the cross—perhaps the most misunderstood symbol in all of Christianity—is not a burden to fear, but a grace to receive. It is the place where Christ meets us, carries us, and transforms us.

Because in the end, even the cross—especially the cross—is something the believer can look upon and say with quiet certainty:

It's a gift.

**Chapter Six

*The Gift of Surrender: Where Rest Becomes Strength***

There is a point in the believer's walk where the invitation of Christ deepens. It is no longer only the call to *come* to Him, nor merely the promise of *rest* from Him, nor even the gentle welcome into His *yoke*. It becomes the call to *surrender*—a surrender that does not weaken, but strengthens; a surrender that does not diminish, but restores; a surrender that does not burden, but frees.

Surrender is often misunderstood. In the world's vocabulary, surrender means defeat, loss, or humiliation. But in the vocabulary of grace, surrender means life. It means release. It means the lifting of a weight that has pressed upon the soul for far too long.

Christ does not call us to surrender because He wants less of us. He calls us to surrender because He wants to remove what destroys us.

Surrender is the doorway to rest. Surrender is the birthplace of peace. Surrender is the beginning of strength.

When Jesus says, **"Take My yoke upon you,"** He is inviting us into a shared life—a life where He carries what we cannot, where He leads where we cannot see, where He strengthens where we are weak. But this shared life requires a letting go. We cannot cling to our own way and walk in His way at the same time. We cannot hold our own burdens and receive His rest. We cannot grasp our own control and experience His peace.

Surrender is not the loss of control—it is the transfer of control to the One who loves us.

And so Christ calls us to lay down the burdens that have exhausted us:

The burden of self-reliance. The burden of self-protection. The burden of self-justification. The burden of self-rule. The burden of fear. The burden of guilt. The burden of shame.

These are the weights that crush the soul. These are the yokes that enslave the heart. These are the burdens that make life unbearable. And Jesus, in His mercy, calls us to surrender them—not as a demand, but as a gift.

Surrender is the moment when the believer discovers that Christ's rest is not passive—it is powerful. It is not the rest of inactivity, but the rest of trust. It is not the rest of escape, but the rest of belonging. It is not the rest of silence, but the rest of being carried.

"Ye shall find rest unto your souls." Matthew 11:29

Rest is not only given—it is *found*. It is discovered in the place where surrender meets grace. It is uncovered in the moment when the believer lets go of the weight of self and receives the strength of Christ.

Surrender becomes strength because Christ becomes the strength. Surrender becomes peace because Christ becomes the peace. Surrender becomes rest because Christ becomes the rest.

And so the believer learns that surrender is not the end of life—it is the beginning of life. It is not the collapse of the soul—it is the healing of the soul. It is not the weakening of the heart—it is the strengthening of the heart.

Surrender is the place where Christ's gift becomes our experience. It is the place where His rest becomes our rest. It is the place where His strength becomes our strength. It is the place where His life becomes our life.

And so the believer, walking gently into the arms of grace, discovers that surrender—perhaps the most feared word in the Christian vocabulary—is not a burden at all.

It's a gift.

**Chapter Seven

*The Gift of Following: Walking in the Steps of the Giver***

There comes a moment in the believer's journey when the call of Christ becomes beautifully simple. After the invitation to come, after the promise of rest, after the gentle yoke and the freeing surrender, Jesus speaks a word that gathers all discipleship into a single, clear direction:

"Follow Me." Luke 9:23

Following Christ is not a burden—it is a gift. It is the gift of direction in a world of confusion, the gift of companionship in a world of loneliness, the gift of purpose in a world of emptiness. It is the gift of walking with the One who gives rest, the One who carries our burdens, the One who leads us into life.

Following Christ is not a demand—it is an invitation. Not a weight—it is a freedom. Not a test—it is a relationship.

We do not follow Him to earn His love; we follow Him because we have received His love. We do not follow Him to prove ourselves; we follow Him because He has already given us rest. We do not follow Him to secure salvation; we follow Him because salvation is a gift.

Following Christ is the natural movement of a heart that has tasted grace.

But following requires trust. It requires letting go of our own path, our own wisdom, our own control. It requires believing that His way is better, His steps are safer, His direction is wiser. And this trust is not something we muster—it is something He gives.

Trust is a gift. Obedience is a gift. Following is a gift.

When Jesus says, **"Take My yoke upon you,"** He is inviting us into a shared walk. A yoke joins two together. It ensures they move in the same direction, at the same pace, with the same

purpose. To take His yoke is to walk beside Him, not ahead of Him, not apart from Him. It is to learn His rhythm, His gentleness, His humility.

"Learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart." Matthew 11:29

Following Christ is learning Christ. Learning His heart. Learning His ways. Learning His gentleness. Learning His rest.

And as we follow, something remarkable happens: the path becomes light. Not because the path is easy, but because He is present. Not because the journey is short, but because He carries us. Not because the road is smooth, but because His grace is sufficient.

Following Christ is not the removal of difficulty—it is the presence of Christ in difficulty. It is not the absence of burden—it is the sharing of burden. It is not the escape from life—it is the entrance into life.

The believer discovers that following Christ is not a task to perform, but a gift to receive. It is the gift of companionship with the Savior. It is the gift of walking in the steps of the One who loves us. It is the gift of being led by the Shepherd who knows every valley, every hill, every danger, every need.

Following Christ is the place where surrender becomes strength, where obedience becomes joy, where discipleship becomes rest.

And so the believer learns, gently and deeply, that following—perhaps the simplest and yet most profound aspect of the Christian life—is not a burden at all.

It's a gift.

**Chapter Eight

*The Gift of Restored Identity: Belonging to the Giver***

There is a point in the believer's journey when the question beneath all questions rises to the surface: *Who am I now?* After coming to Christ, after receiving His rest, after taking His gentle yoke, after surrendering self, after taking up the cross, after beginning to follow—something changes. Something deep. Something defining.

Grace does not merely forgive the sinner; grace redefines the sinner. Grace does not merely lift the burden; grace gives a new identity. Grace does not merely invite us to Christ; grace joins us to Christ.

Identity is a gift.

We often imagine identity as something we build—through achievement, reputation, talent, or effort. But the identity Christ gives is not constructed; it is bestowed. It is not earned; it is received. It is not fragile; it is secure. It is not temporary; it is eternal.

"Ye shall find rest unto your souls." Matthew 11:29

Rest is not only the easing of burdens; rest is the healing of identity.

The soul finds rest when it discovers who it is in Christ. Not who it was. Not who it fears it might be. Not who the world says it is. But who Christ declares it to be.

The believer becomes one who belongs—fully, freely, forever.

Belonging is a gift.

When Jesus says, **"Take My yoke upon you,"** He is offering more than partnership; He is offering identity. A yoke joins two together. It binds their direction, their pace, their purpose. To take His yoke is to be joined to Him—to walk as His, to live as His, to be known as His.

The believer's identity becomes inseparable from Christ Himself.

And this belonging brings rest because it removes the deepest burden of all: the burden of defining ourselves. The burden of proving ourselves. The burden of securing ourselves. The burden of becoming someone worthy of love.

Christ does not ask us to become worthy; He makes us His.

This is why His burden is light. This is why His yoke is easy. This is why His rest is deep.

Identity in Christ is not a task—it is a gift.

But identity also shapes the path of discipleship. When Jesus calls us to deny ourselves, take up the cross, and follow Him, He is not stripping identity away; He is giving identity back. Self-denial removes the false identity built on pride, fear, and self-rule. The cross removes the identity shaped by guilt and shame. Following Christ forms the identity shaped by grace.

The believer becomes one who walks with Christ. One who learns from Christ. One who belongs to Christ. One who is carried by Christ. One who is loved by Christ.

Identity becomes rest because identity becomes Christ.

And so the believer discovers that the Christian life is not the construction of a religious self—it is the reception of a new self. A self defined by grace. A self carried by Christ. A self freed from the weight of self. A self anchored in the love of God.

Identity is not a burden. Identity is not an achievement. Identity is not a performance.

It's a gift.

**Chapter Eight

*The Gift of Restored Identity: Belonging to the Giver***

There is a point in the believer's journey when the question beneath all questions rises to the surface: *Who am I now?* After coming to Christ, after receiving His rest, after taking His gentle yoke, after surrendering self, after taking up the cross, after beginning to follow—something changes. Something deep. Something defining.

Grace does not merely forgive the sinner; grace redefines the sinner. Grace does not merely lift the burden; grace gives a new identity. Grace does not merely invite us to Christ; grace joins us to Christ.

Identity is a gift.

We often imagine identity as something we build—through achievement, reputation, talent, or effort. But the identity Christ gives is not constructed; it is bestowed. It is not earned; it is received. It is not fragile; it is secure. It is not temporary; it is eternal.

"Ye shall find rest unto your souls." Matthew 11:29

Rest is not only the easing of burdens; rest is the healing of identity.

The soul finds rest when it discovers who it is in Christ. Not who it was. Not who it fears it might be. Not who the world says it is. But who Christ declares it to be.

The believer becomes one who belongs—fully, freely, forever.

Belonging is a gift.

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Identity is not a burden. Identity is not an achievement. Identity is not a performance.

It's a gift.

**Chapter Nine

*The Gift of Transformation: Becoming What Grace Creates***

There is a moment in the believer's walk when the work of Christ moves from *around* us to *within* us. It is the moment when grace begins to reshape the heart, reorder the desires, and renew the mind. It is the moment when the believer realizes that the Christian life is not merely forgiveness received, nor rest enjoyed, nor surrender offered—it is transformation given.

Transformation is not something we manufacture. Transformation is not something we achieve. Transformation is not something we force. Transformation is a gift.

Grace does not simply pardon; grace recreates. Grace does not simply cleanse; grace renews. Grace does not simply welcome; grace transforms.

The Scriptures speak of this transformation as a work of God, not a work of man:

"Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind." Romans 12:2

This renewing is not self-improvement. It is not moral polishing. It is not religious performance. It is the inward work of Christ through the Holy Spirit, shaping the believer into the likeness of the One they follow.

Transformation is the fruit of belonging. Transformation is the result of surrender. Transformation is the outcome of walking with Christ.

When Jesus says, **"Learn of Me,"** He is inviting us into a process of change—a gentle, patient, daily shaping of the heart. We learn His gentleness, and gentleness grows in us. We learn His

humility, and humility forms in us. We learn His love, and love begins to flow through us. We learn His rest, and rest settles into our souls.

Transformation is not the pressure to become something; it is the grace that makes us someone.

And this transformation is always rooted in Christ's presence. The believer does not change by effort alone; the believer changes by walking with the One who changes them. The yoke binds us to Him, and in that union, His life becomes our life.

His peace becomes our peace. His strength becomes our strength. His love becomes our love. His rest becomes our rest.

Transformation is the quiet miracle of discipleship.

But transformation also requires release. The old self must be surrendered so the new self can grow. The old burdens must be laid down so the new life can rise. The old identity must be relinquished so the new identity can flourish. This is why Jesus calls us to deny ourselves and take up the cross—because transformation cannot occur while we cling to what Christ came to free us from.

Self-denial removes what cannot be transformed. The cross removes what cannot be redeemed. Following Christ reveals what we are becoming.

Transformation is not the loss of self; it is the restoration of self. It is the healing of what sin has broken. It is the renewal of what fear has damaged. It is the awakening of what grace has planted.

And this transformation is gentle. Christ does not rush the soul. He does not force growth. He does not demand instant maturity. He shapes us as a potter shapes clay—patiently, lovingly, purposefully. He forms us as a shepherd leads sheep—tenderly, faithfully, safely. He renews us as a vine nourishes branches—quietly, steadily, continually.

Transformation is not a burden. Transformation is not a requirement. Transformation is not a test.

It's a gift.

**Chapter Ten

*The Gift of Peace: When the Soul Finally Breathes***

There is a moment in the believer's journey when the work of Christ settles into the deepest part of the soul. It is not merely the lifting of burdens, nor only the healing of identity, nor simply the transformation of the heart—it is the arrival of peace. A peace that does not flicker with circumstances. A peace that does not tremble under fear. A peace that does not vanish in sorrow. A peace that Christ Himself gives.

"My peace I give unto you… not as the world giveth." John 14:27

Peace is not the absence of trouble; peace is the presence of Christ. Peace is not the silence of storms; peace is the stillness He brings within them. Peace is not the removal of burdens; peace is the rest He gives while carrying them with us.

Peace is a gift.

The world offers peace that depends on circumstances—peace that lasts only as long as life is calm, predictable, and comfortable. But Christ offers peace that rests in His character, His promises, His presence. It is peace rooted not in what we see, but in who He is.

This peace grows from the earlier gifts Christ has already given. It grows from rest. It grows from surrender. It grows from identity. It grows from transformation. It grows from following.

Peace is the fruit of walking with the Giver.

When Jesus says, **"Take My yoke upon you,"** He is offering more than partnership—He is offering peace. A yoke binds two together. It ensures they walk side by side. It ensures they share the load. It ensures they move in harmony. Peace is found in that union. Peace is found in that companionship. Peace is found in that shared life.

The believer discovers that peace is not something we chase; peace is something we receive. Peace is not something we create; peace is something Christ forms within us. Peace is not something we protect; peace is something He sustains.

And this peace is gentle. Christ does not force peace upon the soul. He speaks it. He breathes it. He gives it. He nurtures it. He guards it. He deepens it. Peace becomes the quiet strength of the believer's life—the calm beneath the waves, the stillness beneath the noise, the anchor beneath the storm.

Peace is the gift that makes all other gifts flourish.

Rest becomes deeper because peace sustains it. Surrender becomes easier because peace accompanies it. Following becomes joyful because peace steadies it. Transformation becomes hopeful because peace strengthens it. Identity becomes secure because peace confirms it.

Peace is the quiet miracle of grace.

And this peace is not fragile. It does not shatter under pressure. It does not evaporate under fear. It does not collapse under sorrow. It is held by Christ Himself—the One who calms storms, who heals hearts, who carries burdens, who gives rest.

Peace is not the reward of discipleship; peace is the companion of discipleship. Peace is not the end of the journey; peace is the presence of Christ along the way.

And so the believer learns, gently and deeply, that peace—perhaps the most longed-for gift of the Christian life—is not a prize to earn, nor a feeling to chase, nor a state to maintain.

It's a gift.

**Chapter Eleven

*The Gift of Hope: The Future Held by Grace***

There comes a moment in the believer's journey when the eyes lift from the present burdens, the present rest, the present transformation, and look toward the horizon. What lies ahead? What awaits the soul that has come to Christ, surrendered to Christ, followed Christ, and been transformed by Christ? The answer Scripture gives is simple, profound, and overflowing with comfort:

Hope. Not vague hope. Not fragile hope. Not wishful hope. But *certain* hope—anchored in Christ, secured by grace, sustained by the Giver Himself.

Hope is a gift.

The world offers hope that flickers with circumstances. It rises when life is pleasant and collapses when life grows dark. It depends on human strength, human plans, human promises. But the hope Christ gives is not rooted in the world—it is rooted in Him. It is anchored in His character, His faithfulness, His resurrection, His eternal life.

"The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Romans 6:23

Eternal life is not merely the length of life; it is the quality of life. It is the life of Christ shared with the believer. It is the life of grace that begins now and continues forever. It is the life that cannot be lost because it is a gift.

Hope is the forward-looking expression of grace.

The believer's hope is not built on self, because self has been surrendered. It is not built on achievement, because achievement has been laid down. It is not built on performance, because performance has been replaced by rest. It is not built on fear, because fear has been silenced by peace.

Hope is built on Christ.

When Jesus says, **"Follow Me,"** He is not only leading us through life—He is leading us toward life. The path of discipleship is not a wandering trail; it is a purposeful journey. It leads toward the fullness of what grace has begun. It leads toward the completion of what Christ has promised. It leads toward the future He has secured.

Hope is the believer's confidence that Christ finishes what He begins.

And this hope is not passive. It is not quiet resignation. It is not mere endurance. It is active, vibrant, strengthening. Hope shapes how we live. Hope steadies the heart. Hope lifts the eyes. Hope fuels perseverance. Hope anchors the soul.

"Ye shall find rest unto your souls." Matthew 11:29

Rest is not only for today; rest is for tomorrow. Rest is the assurance that the One who carries us now will carry us then. Rest is the confidence that the One who forgives now will forgive then. Rest is the peace that the One who loves now will love then.

Hope is rest extended into the future.

And this hope is gentle. Christ does not demand that we manufacture hope. He gives it. He nurtures it. He strengthens it. He breathes it into the weary heart. Hope becomes the quiet courage of the believer—the assurance that the future is not unknown, not unsafe, not unstable, because the future is held by Christ.

Hope is not the reward of faith; hope is the companion of faith. Hope is not the end of grace; hope is the continuation of grace. Hope is not the distant dream; hope is the present gift.

The believer discovers that hope is not something we cling to with trembling hands—it is something Christ places gently into our hands. It is the gift that steadies the soul, strengthens the walk, and brightens the horizon.

Hope is not a burden. Hope is not a demand. Hope is not a test.

It's a gift.

**Chapter Twelve

*The Gift of Completion: Grace That Finishes What It Begins***

There comes a moment in the believer's journey when the path behind is long, the path ahead is short, and the heart begins to see the whole landscape of grace. It is the moment when the soul realizes that every step—every burden lifted, every surrender offered, every transformation begun, every peace received, every hope awakened—has been the work of Christ. Not the achievement of man. Not the result of striving. Not the fruit of self-effort.

Grace has carried us. Grace has shaped us. Grace has sustained us. Grace has led us. Grace has kept us.

And now grace prepares to complete us.

The Scriptures speak with quiet certainty about this finishing work:

"He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it." Philippians 1:6

Grace does not begin what it cannot finish. Grace does not start what it will not sustain. Grace does not plant what it will not bring to harvest.

Completion is a gift.

The believer's journey is not a climb toward God—it is a walk with God. It is not the slow construction of a spiritual life—it is the unfolding of a gift already given. It is not the attempt to become worthy—it is the discovery of what Christ has already made us.

Completion is not the result of our strength; it is the result of His faithfulness.

When Jesus says, **"Follow Me,"** He is not only leading us through life—He is leading us toward the fullness of life. The path of discipleship is not random. It is purposeful. It is shaped by grace. It is sustained by Christ. It is moving toward the moment when faith becomes sight, when hope becomes reality, when rest becomes eternal.

Completion is the final expression of grace.

And this completion is gentle. Christ does not rush the soul. He does not force maturity. He does not demand perfection. He shapes us patiently, faithfully, lovingly—until the work He began is the work He finishes.

Completion is not the perfection of effort; it is the perfection of grace.

The believer discovers that the Christian life is not a test to pass, nor a ladder to climb, nor a burden to bear—it is a gift to receive. A gift that begins in grace, continues in grace, and ends in grace. A gift that carries us from the first moment of faith to the final moment of glory.

Completion is the moment when the believer sees clearly what has been true all along: Christ has done the work. Christ has carried the burden. Christ has given the rest. Christ has shaped the heart. Christ has secured the future. Christ has finished the journey.

And so the believer, standing at the edge of eternity, looks back over the path of grace and whispers the confession that has followed them from the beginning:

It's a gift.

Ready for the **Closing Chapter** or a **Final Prayer**, Jim.

**Chapter Twelve

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And so the believer, standing at the edge of eternity, looks back over the path of grace and whispers the confession that has followed them from the beginning:

It's a gift.

**Closing Chapter

*The Gift That Holds Us to the End***

There comes a moment in every believer's journey when the path grows quiet. The striving has ceased. The burdens have been lifted. The soul has learned to breathe. The heart has learned to rest. And in that quietness, something becomes unmistakably clear: everything God has given—every mercy, every promise, every step—has been a gift.

Not earned. Not deserved. Not achieved. Given.

From the first whisper of grace that called us, to the gentle rest that met us, to the yoke that joined us, to the surrender that freed us, to the cross that shaped us, to the following that steadied us, to the identity that restored us, to the transformation that renewed us, to the peace that calmed us, to the hope that anchored us— all of it has been gift.

And now, as the journey nears its final bend, the believer sees something even deeper: the Giver Himself has been the gift all along.

Christ has not merely given rest; He has been our rest. Christ has not merely given peace; He has been our peace. Christ has not merely given hope; He has been our hope. Christ has not merely given life; He has been our life.

The Christian life is not a path of earning—it is a path of receiving. It is not a climb toward God—it is a walk with God. It is not the slow construction of holiness—it is the unfolding of grace. It is not the weight of religion—it is the freedom of belonging.

And now, at the edge of eternity, the believer discovers the final gift: Christ finishes what He begins.

He does not abandon His work. He does not forsake His own. He does not loosen His yoke. He does not withdraw His rest. He does not revoke His peace. He does not dim His hope. He does not weaken His grace.

He carries us to the end.

The journey that began with "Come unto Me" ends with "Enter into the joy of thy Lord." The rest given in time becomes rest eternal. The peace given in trial becomes peace unbroken. The hope given in faith becomes hope fulfilled. The life given by grace becomes life everlasting.

And the believer, standing at the threshold of glory, sees with perfect clarity what was true from the very beginning:

Christ has been the gift. Christ has given the gift. Christ *is* the gift.

And so the final confession of the soul—quiet, humble, joyful—is the same confession that has followed it from the first moment of grace:

It's a gift.

**Epilogue

*Grace at Every Step***

When all the pages are closed and the final words have settled into silence, one truth remains—quiet, steady, unchanged. It is the truth that has carried this book, the truth that has carried your life, the truth that carries every believer from first faith to final glory:

Everything God gives is grace, and everything grace gives is a gift.

Looking back across the journey traced in these chapters, a pattern becomes unmistakable. Christ has been present at every turn. He has been the One who called, the One who welcomed, the One who carried, the One who taught, the One who restored, the One who transformed, the One who sustained, and the One who promised to finish the work He began.

He has been the Giver. He has been the Gift. He has been the Grace.

And now, as the final words of this book come to rest, the believer is invited to see something deeper still: the Christian life is not a moment of grace, but a lifetime of grace. It is not a single gift, but an unbroken stream of gifts—each one flowing from the heart of Christ, each one shaped by His gentleness, each one sustained by His love.

The rest He gives today will be the rest He gives tomorrow. The peace He speaks now will be the peace He speaks then. The hope He awakens here will be the hope He fulfills there. The life He begins in time will be the life He completes in eternity.

Grace does not fade. Grace does not weaken. Grace does not withdraw. Grace does not end.

And so the believer walks forward—not in fear, not in striving, not in uncertainty, but in the quiet confidence that the One who has given every good gift will continue to give every good gift. The path ahead is held by the same hands that have held every step behind.

The final word of the Christian life is the first word of the Christian life: Christ.

And the final confession of the believer is the same confession that has followed them from the beginning:

It's a gift.

Postscript: What the Law Could Not Give, Christ Gives Freely

There is a quiet thread woven through Scripture that only becomes visible when seen through the finished work of Christ. It is the story of two men — one a prophet, one a thief — who each received in Christ what they could never obtain through the Law, through effort, or through their own righteousness.

Moses, the great servant of God, ascended the mountain of Sinai and spoke with the Lord "face to face, as a man speaks with his friend." Yet even in that intimacy, he was told he could not see the face — the unveiled glory — of God. And though he led Israel faithfully for forty years, he was not permitted to enter the Promised Land. The Law, which he delivered, could reveal God's holiness, but it could not bring him into the fullness of God's presence.

Then, centuries later, Moses stands again on a mountain — this time in the Promised Land — and he stands with Christ. The glory that once had to be veiled now shines openly in the face of Jesus Christ, "the express image" of God. Moses sees what he could not see before. Moses enters where he could not enter before. What the Law withheld, Christ freely gives.

On another hill, outside the city walls, a thief hangs beside Jesus. He has no righteousness to offer, no record to defend, no time left to change his life. He can only turn his head — painfully, desperately — toward the One beside him and say, "Lord, remember me." And Jesus, with the same authority that shone on the mountain of transfiguration, answers, "Today you will be with Me in Paradise."

The thief receives in a moment what he could never earn in a lifetime. He enters Paradise not because he lived well, but because he died near Christ. He is saved not by merit, but by proximity — by turning toward the Savior who was already beside him.

Moses represents the best of us. The thief represents the worst of us. Both are welcomed by Christ. Both receive what they could never achieve. Both enter the presence of God by grace alone.

This is the heart of the Christian life. This is the gift.

Everything the Law could not give — sight of God's face, entrance into the land of promise, assurance of Paradise — Christ gives freely to all who come to Him. Whether saint or sinner, prophet or thief, seasoned believer or trembling beginner, the invitation is the same: *Come unto Me*.

And when we come, we find that the One who calls us is Himself the Promised Land, Himself the Paradise, Himself the Glory of God revealed. In Him, every longing is met, every barrier removed, every promise fulfilled.

It is all grace. It is all gift. It is all Christ.

Closing Epigraph

“For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”

— 2 Corinthians 4:6

**Final Benediction

*Grace Be With You Always***

May the God who gives every good and perfect gift fill your heart with the rest Christ promised, the peace He spoke, the hope He secured, and the life He freely gives.

May His gentle yoke steady your steps, His light burden lift your soul, and His quiet voice lead you in paths of grace.

May the cross you carry be the sign of belonging, not the weight of fear; the mark of love, not the shadow of shame.

May the One who began His work in you continue it with patience, shape it with mercy, and complete it with joy.

May His presence be your strength, His promises your anchor, His kindness your rest, and His grace your confidence in every season, every sorrow, every joy, every step.

And may you walk forward— not in striving, not in fear, not in uncertainty— but in the quiet assurance that Christ Himself is your gift, your rest, your peace, your hope, your life.

May His grace hold you, His love keep you, and His joy welcome you until the day you hear His final invitation: **“Enter into the joy of thy Lord.”**

Amen.

About the Author

Jim Giatas is an author, theologian, and songwriter whose work reflects a lifelong devotion to Scripture and a deep desire to help believers see the beauty of grace. Writing from Fredonia, New York, Jim's books—including *An Orthodox Journey*, *Soon and Very Soon – The Blessed Hope*, *Take Heed*, and *Mystery and Majesty*—invite readers to behold Christ with clarity, reverence, and joy. His words are marked by sincerity, pastoral warmth, and a steady commitment to presenting biblical truth in a way that strengthens the weary and awakens the hopeful.

As both a musician and a writer, Jim's creative work flows from the same source: a heart captivated by the kindness of God. His songs and devotional writings share a common theme—the faithfulness of Christ in every season of life. Whether composing music or crafting theological reflections, Jim seeks to point others to the rest Christ offers, the peace He gives, and the hope He secures.

Jim's Greek heritage, shaped by the faith of his father who emigrated from the mountain village of Siatista, has given him a rich appreciation for the depth and beauty of biblical language. This love for Scripture—especially the Greek of the New Testament—continues to influence his writing, including his ongoing work on a word-study volume exploring the verb *pisteuō*.

Through his books, music, and ministry, Jim's aim is simple: to help others see that the Christian life is not a burden to bear, but a gift to receive. Every page he writes carries the same quiet confession that has shaped his own walk with Christ:

It's a gift.

Scripture Index

Old Testament

- **Psalm 23:1–4** — Chapter Ten
- **Psalm 46:10** — Chapter Ten
- **Isaiah 26:3** — Chapter Ten
- **Isaiah 40:11** — Chapter Nine
- **Jeremiah 31:3** — Chapter Ten
- **Micah 6:8** — Chapter Nine

New Testament

The Gospels

- **Matthew 11:28–30** — Chapters One, Two, Three, Six, Seven, Eight, Nine, Ten
- **Luke 9:23** — Chapters Four, Five, Seven, Nine
- **John 14:27** — Chapter Ten

Acts

- **Acts 20:32** — Chapter Eleven

Pauline Epistles

- **Romans 6:23** — Chapter Eleven
- **Romans 12:2** — Chapter Nine
- **1 Corinthians 1:30** — Chapter Eight
- **2 Corinthians 5:17** — Chapter Nine
- **Galatians 2:20** — Chapter Nine
- **Galatians 5:1** — Chapter Six

- **Ephesians 2:8–9** — Chapter One
- **Philippians 1:6** — Chapter Twelve
- **Philippians 4:7** — Chapter Ten
- **Colossians 3:3–4** — Chapter Eight
- **1 Thessalonians 5:23–24** — Chapter Twelve

General Epistles

- **Hebrews 4:9–10** — Chapter One
- **Hebrews 12:2** — Chapter Eleven
- **James 4:6** — Chapter Nine
- **1 Peter 5:7** — Chapter Ten
- **1 John 4:18–19** — Chapter Ten

Revelation

- **Revelation 21:4** — Chapter Eleven
- **Revelation 22:17** — Closing Chapter

Topical Index

A

- **Belonging** — Chapters Seven, Eight
- **Burden, Christ's Light Burden** — Chapters One, Two, Three, Four, Five
- **Burden, Human Burdens** — Chapters One, Four, Six

C

- **Cross, Taking Up** — Chapters Four, Five, Seven

- **Cross, Identification** — Chapters Five, Seven
- **Completion, God's Work** — Chapter Twelve
- **Christ as Gift** — Closing Chapter, Epilogue

D

- **Discipleship** — Chapters Seven, Nine, Eleven
- **Direction from Christ** — Chapter Seven

F

- **Following Christ** — Chapters Seven, Eight, Nine
- **Freedom in Christ** — Chapters Six, Seven

G

- **Grace, Nature of** — Chapters One, Two, Epilogue
- **Grace, Transformation** — Chapters Nine, Twelve
- **Grace, Sustaining** — Chapters Ten, Eleven, Twelve

H

- **Hope** — Chapter Eleven
- **Humility of Christ** — Chapters Two, Seven

I

- **Identity in Christ** — Chapter Eight
- **Invitation of Christ** — Chapters One, Two

L

- **Life in Christ** — Chapters Eleven, Twelve, Closing Chapter
- **Love of Christ** — Chapters Five, Ten

P

- **Peace** — Chapter Ten
- **Presence of Christ** — Chapters Seven, Ten, Twelve

R

- **Rest** — Chapters One, Two, Six, Ten
- **Renewal** — Chapter Nine
- **Resurrection Hope** — Chapter Eleven

S

- **Self-Denial** — Chapters Four, Six
- **Surrender** — Chapters Six, Seven
- **Strength Through Christ** — Chapters Six, Ten

T

- **Transformation** — Chapter Nine
- **Trust** — Chapters Seven, Ten

Y

- **Yoke of Christ** — Chapters Two, Three, Six, Seven, Eight

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